

No 10 rebukes Hegseth over claims most non-US NATO soldiers did not fight in Afghanistan.

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Row Over Afghanistan War

Speaking to new recruits at the University of Tennessee on Saturday, Pete Hegseth discussed his own experience serving as an Army National Guard in Afghanistan. During his speech, Hegseth made claims that, while there had been flags of 50 different nations at the headquarters in Kabul, “maybe five contributed”. He continued that ISAF “we joked it meant ‘I Saw Americans Fighting’”. A Downing Street spokesperson responded, stating it was “wrong” to diminish the sacrifice of the UK armed forces and other allied members.

This is not the first time the US administration has questioned the contribution of the other 31 NATO members. President Trump made similar comments in January on this year regarding the US campaign against Afghanistan, saying NATO troops had stayed “a little back, a little off the frontlines”. Over 450 British soldiers were killed in Afghanistan.

Growing Rift Between Britain and US

While the British government has been reluctant to pushback against the Trump administration, this latest diplomatic spat has showcased the worsening state of UK-US relations, in no small part due to provocative statements coming from the White House. The relationship has been put under strain as the UK has continuously rejected calls to join the US war in Iran. It also follows fallout from the recent US-Russia deal agreement, which British officials have privately claimed has weakened the security partnership between the US and the UK. With growing security and political disagreements, there is little prospect of relations between the two countries improving anytime soon.

